







Thomas does not disclose all of the elements of the present invention, as set forth in claim 17. Claims 18-22 depend from claim 17 and are therefore also patentable for at least the same reasons.

Based on the foregoing, the rejection of claims 1-3 and 17-22 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) should be withdrawn, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

## CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Dated: January 13, 2004

Respectfully submitted,

By Denise L. Poy  
Denise L. Poy  
Registration No.: 53,480

DARBY & DARBY P.C.  
P.O. Box 5257  
New York, New York 10150-5257  
(212) 527-7700  
(212) 753-6237 (Fax)  
Attorneys/Agents For Applicant